

LA PLATA, MD – Congressman Steny Hoyer (MD-05) today hosted the Southern Maryland Federal Small Business Forum in conjunction with the U.S. General Services Administration (GSA), the Small Business Administration (SBA) and local small business organizations. Hoyer welcomed more than one hundred regional small businesses, chambers and economic development organizations to the event at the Business and Industry Center at the College of Southern Maryland's La Plata Campus. The Minority Business Advisory Council was critical in organizing the day's event.

The forum provided an opportunity for local small businesses to learn valuable information about working with the federal government, what resources are available to help and about other issues relevant to their businesses.

In addition, the forum featured speakers, workshops, computer training sessions, and exhibits designed in conjunction with GSA and local small business organizations. Federal experts spoke and answered questions about Small Business Administration Programs, GSA Schedule Process, and Federal Procurement Data Systems, marketing strategies and other related business issues.

"This conference was organized with one simple goal in mind – to provide you with as much quality and useable information about how your business can grow and prosper as possible," Hoyer told the participants today.

"I am a strong supporter of small business and recognize its importance to our nation's and Maryland's economic well being. Small businesses are truly the engine of America's economy," added Hoyer. "Furthermore, Southern Maryland's proximity to Washington, DC and the military bases located in our region provide an abundance of opportunities to work with the federal government and the military.

"As many of you know, I frequently visit local businesses. I have found these visits to be an extremely effective way one to learn about the challenges that they face, what I might be able to do to help them succeed, and the overall business environment. Thank you for your participation today. I look forward to working with you in the future," concluded Hoyer.

Small businesses represent over 99 percent of employers nationwide, account for half of the

country's gross domestic product, pay 44.3 percent of total U.S. private payroll and create three out of every four jobs nationally. There are nearly 25 million small businesses in the United States and nearly 500,000 in Maryland alone.

The federal marketplace accounts for approximately \$285 billion dollars and it is vital that small businesses get their fair share. In Fiscal Year 2004 alone, Southern Maryland received nearly \$2 billion in federal contracts (Calvert- \$28,259,962, Charles- \$148,792,566, St. Mary's- \$1,657,976,100). According to the federal procurement data system, over \$30 billion in federal contracting went to the state of Maryland in that same year.

The forum lasted from 8 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., with Hoyer delivering a keynote address at 12:15 p.m. It began with a discussion of the type of SBA programs available to small businesses, especially the 8(a) program. The SBA's 8(a) BD Program, named for a section of the Small Business Act, is a business development program created to help small disadvantaged businesses compete in the American economy and access the federal procurement market.

Next, the forum focused on how to use the Federal Procurement Data System. The Federal Procurement Data Center (FPDC), part of GSA, operates and maintains the Federal Procurement Data System (FPDS). The FPDS is the central repository of statistical information on federal contracting. The system contains detailed information on contract actions over \$25,000 and summary data on procurements of less than \$25,000. Also, this session had presenters from the Department of Homeland Security, the Navy, and Veteran's Affairs who talked about how their agencies work with small businesses.

The final morning session focused on how small businesses can access capital. This session included a financing roundtable with representatives from Maryland Bank & Trust, Bank of America, M&T Bank, Mercantile Bank & Trust, and Maryland Small Business Financing Authority.

In the afternoon session, there were four workshops including "Federal Procurement Data System and Central Contractor Registration" in the computer lab, "Selling to the Federal Government," "Discussion with Prime Contractor," and "Q & A with Small Business Contractors." Additionally, an on-site computer lab was open for the attendees, with staff available to help them register with and navigate the GSA Schedule and FPDS.

Hoyer was joined at the event by Donald C. Williams, Regional Administrator, National Capital Region, GSA, Mike Mose, President, Minority Business Advisory Council (MBAC), Sandy Washington, Chairperson, MBAC, Southern Maryland Chamber Organizations, and other local small business organizations.

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